

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for inhibiting apoptosis of a cell comprising treating the cell, a mammal comprising the cell, or a tissue comprising the cell, with an effective amount a E3/6.7K polypeptide.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the treating step comprises administering to the cell a nucleic acid encoding the polypeptide, whereby the polypeptide is expressed in the cell.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the administering is of a viral vector comprising the nucleic acid, with the proviso that if the viral vector is adenovirus, the nucleic acid is other than a naturally occurring adenovirus E3 nucleic acid or the nucleic acid is under the transcription control of a promoter not from adenovirus.
4. The method of claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein the cell is in a eukaryotic cell culture.
5. The method of claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein the cell is in a mammalian patient suffering from a degenerative, an immunodeficiency, an inflammatory or a neurodegenerative disease.
6. A method of decreasing apoptosis in a tissue or cell population in a patient comprising:
- (a) withdrawing tissue or a cell from the patient, (b) treating the tissue or cells with an effective amount of a E3/6.7 polypeptide; and (c) returning the treated tissue or cells to the patient.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein the treating comprises administering a nucleic acid encoding the polypeptide whereby the nucleic acid is expressed in the cells or tissue.
8. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a E3/6.7K polypeptide and a carrier suitable for facilitating delivery of the polypeptide to a cell.

9. A nucleic acid comprising a non-naturally occurring adenovirus E3 nucleic acid capable of encoding a E3/6.7K polypeptide.

10. A recombinant virus comprising a nucleic acid encoding a E3/6.7K polypeptide with the proviso that if the virus is adenovirus, the nucleic acid is other than a naturally occurring adenovirus E3 nucleic acid or the nucleic acid is under the transcriptional control of a promoter, not from adenovirus.

11. The recombinant virus of claim 10 wherein the nucleic acid is operably linked to a promoter, the virus is replication defective, and the polynucleotide is expressed upon infection of a eukaryotic cell with the virus.

~~12.~~ The use of a E3/6.7K polypeptide, a nucleic acid encoding said polypeptide or a vector comprising said nucleic acid for the treatment of apoptosis.

~~13.~~ The use of a E3/6.7K polypeptide, a nucleic acid encoding said polypeptide or a vector comprising said nucleic acid for the preparation of a medicament for the treatment of apoptosis.

~~14.~~ An assay for an agent that modulates anti-apoptotic activity of a E3/6.7K polypeptide which comprises: combining the polypeptide with a sample suspected of comprising the agent; and, determining whether anti-apoptotic activity is modulated.

15. The assay of claim 14 wherein said combining is in a cell or an extract of a cell that is rescued from apoptosis by an E3/6.7K polypeptide which is expressed in or is administered to the cell.

16. The assay of claim 15 wherein said determining is by detection or measurement of TNF- α activity.

17. The assay of claim 16 wherein said activity is characterized by arachidonic acid release from the cell.